

Good morning, Senator Coleman and Representative Fox and all the members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Michael Norton and I am the Vice President of Clinical Operations at the Midwestern Connecticut Council of Alcoholism, Inc. (MCCA). I am here today to speak to you in favor of House Bill 5553, An Act Concerning Substance Abuse Programs.

Headquartered in Danbury, CT since 1972, MCCA now provides all levels of substance abuse treatment programs, family counseling services and mental health counseling in clinics located in Danbury, New Milford, Waterbury and Torrington. MCCA has contracts with: the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch to provide Adult Behavioral Health Services; the Department of Children and Families to provide Project Safe evaluations and treatment; the Federal Bureau of Prisons to provide Transitional Drug Abuse Treatment; the United States District Court Federal Probation Office to provide substance abuse treatment to federal probationers; the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to provide the Pre-Trial Intervention Programs for first-time DWI and DUI offenders; and MCCA was also contracted with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to provide the Weekend Intervention Program for multiple DWI and DUI offenders until its repeal on December 31, 2011.

MCCA wholeheartedly endorses the legislation for mandatory installation of ignition interlock devices for multiple DWI/DUI offenders in Connecticut. The literature is clear that recidivism to DWI/DUI behavior is severely reduced while the devices are installed in offenders' vehicles. Forty-seven states now use the ignition interlock devices in varying ways with everyone indicating positive results. Our concern at the repeal of the mandatory treatment program was what would happen after the term requiring the devices expired. We reasoned that, without any treatment intervention, many offenders would resume drinking and driving behavior.

And therefore, MCCA is especially encouraged by the wisdom of re-instituting the mandated substance abuse counseling intervention for multiple offenders as proposed in Sections 3 and 4 of this Bill. As you well know, a person arrested for a second offense of DWI/DUI has most likely completed an alcohol and drug abuse education intervention. And that intervention unfortunately did not result in changed behavior around alcohol/drug use and impaired driving. This fact in and of itself indicates the need for additional and more intensive substance abuse treatment. In collaboration with DMV and the other providers, who are here today, MCCA provided a Weekend Intervention Program which proved to have a positive impact on many participants' drinking and driving behavior. The literature indicates that the use of ignition interlock devices in combination with mandatory substance abuse treatment vs. the ignition interlock device alone results in much lower recidivism rates to DWI/DUI behavior.

The other area of concern is that the mandated treatment program incorporated a two-year monitoring provision, during which time multiple offenders were required to periodically report back to treatment providers for continued assessment of their current drinking and driving behavior. This provision of the program has the potential to allow treatment providers to intervene before any additional drinking and driving arrest or worse.

In summary, on behalf of MCCA, I want to thank the Committee for its time and attention and ask that you pass all the provisions of HB 5553. The use of ignition interlock devices **in combination** with mandatory substance abuse treatment programming and continued monitoring of multiple offenders by substance abuse treatment professionals provides the citizens of the State of Connecticut with the strongest approach to dealing with the dangers of drinking and driving behavior.